

upon in the divine mind, and not the original plan altered after man's transgression.

*The fourth step in the investigation of this subject leads me to attempt to show that, in the present system of the world, death to the inferior animals, is a benevolent provision, and to man, also, when not aggravated or converted into a curse by his own sin.*

In examining this point, as well as many others in natural theology, where the existence of evil is concerned, we must assume that the present system of the world is the best which infinite wisdom and benevolence could devise. And this we may consistently do. For the prominent design throughout nature appears to be beneficial to animal natures, and suffering is only incidental, and happiness, moreover, is superadded to the functions of animals, where it is unnecessary to the perfect performance of the function. We may be certain, therefore, that the Author of such a system can neither be malevolent nor indifferent to the happiness of animals, but must be benevolent; and, therefore, the system must be the best possible, since such a Being could constitute no other.

Now, death being an essential feature of such a system, we should expect to find it, as a whole, a benevolent provision. But, in the case of man, the Bible represents it as a penal infliction, and such is its general aspect in the human family. So far as the mere extinction of life is concerned, it is the same in man as in other animals; but sin arms it with a deadly sting, by pointing the offender to a world of retribution, as he sees the menacing dart of the great destroyer aimed at his heart. And, indeed, through all his days, man's power of anticipation keeps death ever before him, as the end of all his present enjoyments, and the commencement, it may be, of unmitigated suffering. But the inferior animals, being incapable of sin, find none of these aggravations to give keenness to their final sufferings. No anticipation of death keeps it ever in view, as a terrific enemy. No guilty conscience points them to a righteous throne of judgment, where they must be arraigned. But when the stroke comes, it falls unexpectedly, and the mere physical suffering is all that gives severity to their dissolution.

In the case of man, too, there is the sundering of ties too strong for any thing but death to break; ties which bind him